

[Satisfied with Life]

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Original Names: Changed Names:

Lucille Keller Marjorie Billman C9 - 1/22/41 - N.C. Box 2

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Person interviewed: Mrs. Teddy Lucille Keller

Occupation: Housewife (white)

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"I'm a victim of a large family," declared Marjorie Billman, "and I don't believe in them. I helped work for my father's family when I should have been in school. It was this way with all of my brothers and sisters: they all had to help support the family. We were denied the advantages children should have because of that large family, and we had to exercise the greatest care in spending and see that not a penny was spent foolish. So you see why I'm so disgusted with large families for poor folks. They have got no business with them.

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"I began work in the cotton mill at the age of thirteen. I did manage to finish the ninth grade in school before I quit entirely to go to work. My father was sick, and I was the oldest child. Week after week I brought my pay home and turned it over to them, and about all I ever got out of it was what I ate. I did get enough clothes to get by with.

"At the age of fourteen I got married, and I want to say that that's another thing I don't believe in: child marriages. When I was married I didn't realize what I was doing. I knew very little about sex or what was required of a wife. I had never given a minute's thought to what it meant to be with child 2 for nine months. I knew that childbirth was painful, but I had never realized the seriousness of it or what it meant to be a mother.

"My husband was nineteen at the time of our marriage. He was of a small family, having only one brother. He was born up North where his father was a construction contractor, and he had taught his son the trade. At the time of our marriage my husband was construction foreman for a local concern. His salary was \$25 a week, and if we had been older we could have lived well on that; but our inexperience made it difficult for us to get along.

"At fifteen I found myself pregnant. We were living with my folks and they did all they could to help us out. He got along all right with my folks, but he wanted to move over to his mother's. I refused and we began to quarrel; we were both stubborn. My condition took a lot of the romance out of me, but I still loved my husband in a way. At last, however, I told him to go live with his folks and I would live with mine. He left. My baby came. I worked in the mill while Mother looked after it. It was a boy and she taught him Christianity, unselfishness,/ love, and respect for all.

"My husband came back after a year and a half separation, but soon it was the same old situation. We quarreled about living with his people, then we separated again. We had separated four times by the time I was twenty-two. During the times we were separated I

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went with other men, but I never loved anyone but him. Then we decided to quit our foolish ways.

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"We got an apartment and set up a home of our own. That was six years ago, and I find that I have never been so happy in my life before. My husband has a good job now with an express company. I keep his books for him and have his meals prepared on time. We own a car and he takes me with him on trips, or we go out riding most every day. Our son is well, healthy, and strong. He is about all a real boy can be and we are both proud of him. Being raised in a large family and allowed to associate with the neighborhood children, he is unselfish and broad-minded. He can give and take.

"I believe in birth control, especially among poor folks, but a child raised by himself is generally selfish. If people are going to have any they should have at least two so one would be company and playmate for the other. I would have another child if I could, but I have had an operation for female trouble that has made me barren. It's the only time I ever was confined to a hospital and the only time I ever had a doctor except when my baby was born.

"My husband's people for several generations back were construction folks, while my ancestors were farmers. My parents were honest and believed fully in Christianity and education, while their poverty kept them from exercising their beliefs in regard to education. One of my uncles was a writer. He was injured while on tour in the West and died two years later. He was the best educated of any of my people.

"We aim to give our son a college education if he desired it, but we're going to leave that up to him after he finishes high 4 school. With a high school education he should be able to decide this for himself.

"I feel everyone should have at least a high school education because this is required by most businesses employing help now, and then it helps a person in trading and keeping

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what they possess. Most every child of the middle class can get a high school education now with the improvement in the present school system, while I think the schools could be improved more. There is too much time given over to play in the schools now—too many socials, entertainments, and societies. The pupil who keeps up with the social life of the present day schools, unless unusually bright, will find it hard at times to concentrate on his studies.

“To educate my son is one of my greatest ambitions. The other is to own a home. We own a car, and all our furniture is paid for. I guess we should have bought a home before buying a car, but a home is the next goal which we are trying to reach. We should reach this goal within a few years, because two-thirds of my husband's present salary would keep us up satisfactory.

“I believe in using home remedies as much as possible and calling a doctor as the last resort. Our medical bills for the last six years has not been over \$5 a year average. Our Income is adequate to meet all bills but we use discretion in buying. I look for bargains, and I am not very particular as/ to the name of the article nor the place where it is bought just so it has quality. I use the same methods in buying groceries we use in buying our clothes. I buy a lot of a staple article if it is offered as a special. I have studied goods until I am a judge 5 of values. I don't believe in paying a whole lot for a name when some other article of the same quality and value sells for much less.

“Our family is small, and it does not take so much for us to live on anyway. Three people can live comfortably on \$15 a week and have plenty to eat and decent clothes. They can live well on \$25 a week. We spend \$25 a week most of the time, while we could live comfortably on much less.

“I am an Episcopalian because that was the church I attended when I was a child. I think other denominations are just as good. I think all Christian people should join some church, while living right according to what constitutes a Christian life is about all that counts. I

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attend church services regularly and also take part in the church societies, plays, and entertainments which are given for the purpose of getting money for charity and other church obligations. We give about \$25 a year to the church. Everyone should attend church. The way the masses are losing interest in this feature is alarming. I think people should be sincere in attending church. If they have no motive in doing so they had as well stay away.

"In regard to politics, I am a Democrat and so is my husband. I think we have better business conditions under Democratic rule, especially the Roosevelt Administration. Of course, all my ancestors were Democrats, but I am not influenced by this fact. I cast my ballot for the party I think will do most for the average American citizen.

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"We are not extravagant in regard to our food supply, yet we have plenty of what I consider a balanced diet. For breakfast we generally have bacon and eggs, one cereal, toast, and coffee. I serve grapefruit or oranges with the morning meal also. For lunch we have vegetables, generally two, chicken, or boiled ham. For dinner we have the left-over vegetables from lunch with hot biscuits and perhaps a fried steak. The bread served with each meal is as follows: breakfast, light bread toasted; lunch, corn bread and light bread; dinner, biscuits and corn bread. In winter we serve coffee with all three meals. In summer we serve tea with lunch and dinner. We serve sweets such as sugar, molasses, and honey.

"Our amusements are few but adequate for recreation. We go to ride most every evening, and my husband goes hunting and fishing during the season. We attend shows now and then, while we are not so interested in them. We do not attend dances any more, but when we were younger we danced. My husband and I attend ball games often. He is somewhat of a fan. I do not care so much for foot, base or softball games, but he is very much interested and I enjoy going to the games with him.

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"I saw the show, 'The Birth Of a Baby', and I think that was going a bit too far. The average/ young man or woman don't know enough about sex for such not to disturb their minds too much, and for children I think such a show is terrible. It will have a bad influence on their minds. To my way of thinking, there is no moral to such a show for adults, and for immature girls and boys it is destructive to their minds as it only perplexes them, leaving 7 too much to the imagination which might be taken the wrong way because of lack of knowledge."

Marjorie, her husband, and their eleven-year-old son, occupy a three-room apartment. The front room is furnished with a studio couch, a large desk, a studio chair, a rocker, and a straight chair. It also has two center tables and two end tables. The porch which is six by ten feet juts out almost to the street and has a swing on the west side. The floor of the front room is covered with a linoleum rug. Next to the front room is a bedroom furnished with a bed, a rocking chair, a chest of drawers, a vanity dresser, a radio table, and radio. The kitchen is furnished with an electric refrigerator, oil range, kitchen cabinet, utility cabinet and oblong kitchen table. A fuel oil heater is in the kitchen and is used to heat the entire apartment.

"This is the happiest period of my life" she continued. "My husband and I have always loved each other. We're older now and understand each other better. Our son is a great pleasure. We have both vowed never to separate again, and we're looking forward to the happiness we now enjoy to continue. We are both striving to make our present situation a condition that will last until death shall separate us.

"Above all, we are trying to live Christian lives so that when death, the necessary end, shall come, we will find still more happiness in eternity."

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